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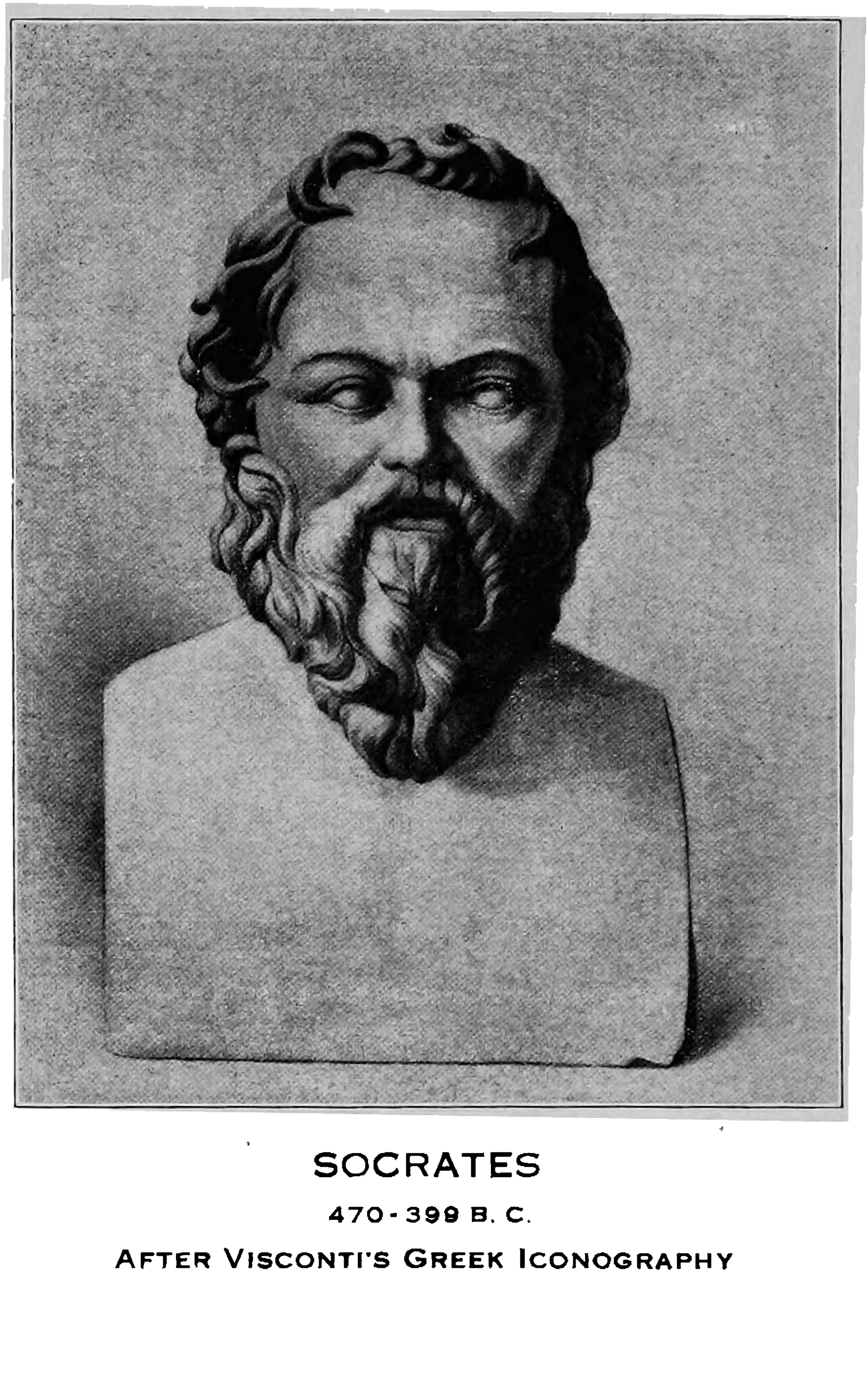

SOCRATES

470-399 B. C.

AFTER VISCONTI'S GREEK ICONOGRAPHY

SOCRATES
MASTER OF LIFE

BY

WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD

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NOTE.

The following study is reprinted with slight revisions from *The Open Court* of January—May, 1915. Written a good many years ago as a companion-piece to the author's *Poet of Galilee*, it was an effort to re-interpret, imaginatively yet critically, an ancient personality that has too often become for the scholar merely one or another technical problem, and for the general reader too often but a name or an anecdote.

W. E. L.

MADISON, WISCONSIN, June 10, 1915.

TO THE MEMORY OF

MY TEACHERS

WILLIAM JAMES

AND

BORDEN PARKER BOWNE

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INTRODUCTORY.

I.

SHELLEY referred to the great man of our title as

"Socrates, the Jesus Christ of Greece,"

nor was the English poet the first or the last to institute the comparison. The fathers of the church, when answering the jests of paganism, cited the martyr of the hemlock beside the martyr of the cross; free-thinkers of yesterday and to-day have exalted his ethics and his mission in challenge to the Christian world and its prophet. He has been compared to Buddha and the religious reformers of the ancient kingdoms of Judah and Samaria. Yet, as we shall see, the historic Socrates was no religious zealot and founded no religion. The traditional figure is slowly but certainly undergoing modification wherever men have learned to distinguish Socrates from the men who walk

either side or in front of him; the genuine voice is beginning to sound more clear as our ears separate it from Xenophon's confusing oratory and the insistent music of Plato. And now is there to be any longer reason for numbering Saul among the prophets? Has the instinct of the generations been wrong altogether? I think not. Socrates, in a sense that would justify honorable mention of his name and fame in any work on religious leaders, proclaimed long before Paul the unknown God unto the Athenians.

Socrates concerns us from the point of view of religious leadership on several grounds: as a soul interested in the salvation of man, as a life witnessing the laws of the spirit, as the central personality of a great people, and as an historic contrast to other more specifically religious types.

Socrates was interested in the salvation of man. Salvation shall be taken out of the vocabulary of the theologians where it has troubled the human race long enough: the salvation of man shall not mean any longer security on a day of judgment; nor even alone the loosening of the bonds of sin. It shall mean emancipation from all that hobbles or shackles the mind—

emancipation from ignorance, uncouthness, stupidity, gloom, fear, and the whole interminable train of devils, among whom sin, though chief, is but one. The emancipators, the saviours, have been many: teachers in the village school, singers in the street, painters at the courts of kings, as well as prophets and poets on the mountain. What Socrates stood for in this multitudinous business of salvation will, I hope, be manifest to us in the sequel.

Socrates, as a life witnessing the laws of the spirit, is a proof of things beyond time. There is the universal, the transcendental implication in every man—in the farmer harvesting his grain against the winter snows, in the grimy machinist who sits in the night school, in the thief and the prostitute whose miseries, deducible from violations of the universal, hint at the implication no less. But there are a few men and women who have given majestic and imposing proof: they are the incarnations in that mythology which is our poor best interpretation of the truth and beauty of the divine something which sustains the world. Among them perhaps is Socrates. And in a humbler sense, too, he is beyond time. We of to-day have far enough transcended the pitiful help-

lessness of that old Greek world in turning nature to account for our own convenience. We have steamboat and railroad — we ride faster; we have telephone and wireless—we speak farther. But, though in devising these wonders we also be assisting in the emancipation of man, let us not deceive ourselves: the most vital matter is still not how fast we ride, but for what ends; not how far we speak, but to what purpose. The deepest problems are the same as then, and Socrates was perhaps nearer to their solution than some of us.

He was the central personality of the Greek race, born in the fulness of time out of the folk and absorbed after death into the folk, the culmination of the old, the starting-point for the new—besides the Olympiads, a numeral in the Greek calendar. If he suggests in this the founders of religions, there is also something of their potent eccentricity in the means employed to drive his purposes home to his fellows—in his word of mouth lessons to chance individuals or groups and in his attaching devoted followers to his side. He was as primitive and vital in his relations to the Athenians as was Mohammed, declaiming his earlier surahs to the Meccans, or as was Jesus to the

Galilean fishermen who marveled at his proverbs and stories. Pythagoras had founded a cult; Empedocles had boasted in sonorous hexameters—a medium itself betraying the inevitable remoteness of the man of letters—how,

"Crowned both with fillets and with flowering wreaths,"[1]

he was followed "with his throngs of men and women" as he came "to thriving cities," and was besought by thousands craving for oracles or healing words. But surely no other Greek so completely returned to that oldest and (where practicable) that most efficient pedagogy—the personal voice, gesture, and pause. The life of Socrates was one long conversation, as Mohammed's was one long harangue.

Nevertheless, it is also for what he is not that I set Socrates here beside Jesus, the Prophet of Islam, and the rest; and his differing emphasis on the principal factors of life, his differing vision and temperament will serve to set in clearer relief those men who, to speak literally, called the race to prayer or proclaimed the acceptable day of the Lord.

[1] See *The Fragments of Empedocles*, translated in blank verse by William Ellery Leonard. Open Court Publishing Co., Chicago.

II.

If Socrates were with us to-day, the short-hand reporter would soon have his pithiest sayings verbatim, perhaps publishing them subject to the sage's own proof-reading. And the photographer would catch his characteristic poses, his broad face, his shabby mantle, his very stride; while the phonograph would respond with its infinitesimal and inerrant tracery to the modulations of his voice—for Socrates was a playful and curious spirit—and thus posterity might, merely by some care in preserving a few bits of dead wax and film, see his living image move across a screen or hear the old voice over and over, like one of the djinn in a magic box. Whimsical as this may seem, there may come a time, when once these marvelous inventions shall have been freed from their present associations as the fakirs of popular amusement, that serious and organized efforts will be made so to conserve such truly spiritual resources from the Heraclitic flux.

But the historic Socrates had not even the shorthand reporter. And how have we come by that which we have, and how far may we

trust it? Plato makes Alcibiades say (in the *Symposium*, 32) that Socrates's conversation was reproduced by other people, almost like the songs of a rhapsodist. A certain Simon, a leather-cutter, we are told by Diogenes Laertius, published memoranda of conversations held by Socrates in his shop. Xenophon, in the *Memorabilia* (I, 4), alludes to several collections of anecdotes about him; and in his *Apology* notes that others had written on the theme of Socrates's defense and death—among whom, besides Plato, we know the names of Lysias and Demetrius. Tradition speaks also of Socratic conversations by Æschines, and a few fragments of Antisthenes, Aristippus, and other *viri Socratici* are still extant. Had we no other information than the items just cited, we should still be able to infer that men began early and continued long to put Socratic dialogue and anecdote on paper, like the followers of the rabbis and of Jesus. But did they put them down right? We are told that men in those days were in the habit of using the verbal memory to an extent unknown now—how the rhapsodists had Homer by heart, how redemption rose up in the Attic muse at Syracuse for whoever could repeat a drama of Euripides.

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Greek rhetorician. The set speech was a favorite adornment with Livy, and not until very modern days did it disappear from the pages of historians. In the classical world the distinction between history and rhetoric, between fact and artistic effect, was imperfectly understood. The significance of this will become clearer in connection with the brief examination of Xenophon and Plato that follows.

The *Memorabilia* appear to have been written in the quiet of an old age at Xenophon's estate at Scillus, a few miles from Olympia—long after he had returned to Greece as the leader of the retreat of the Ten Thousand, some nine months following the execution of the master. He seems to have been a member of Socrates's little circle for ten years, though, if we may judge from his own writings (not to mention the significant fact that Plato does not introduce him among the speakers of the *Dialogues*), he was hardly one of its more speculative and clever personalities. Xenophon had something in him, bluff, adventurous, un-Attic, that took him off to the Orient as a soldier of fortune, or down into Sparta, away from the softer culture and the unstable democracy of the northern city. He was a veri-

table store-house of old-fashioned pieties and superstitions, as we see from the *Hellenica*, the *Cyropcdia*, and the *Anabasis*, where oracles, dreams, thunder, earthquakes, and sneezing perpetually accompany the march of armies and the councils of chiefs. His ethics have a practical bias; and other questions of purely practical interest often engage his pen—horsemanship and "domestic science," though he writes with Attic clarity and ease. Such is Xenophon, without reference to the *Memorabilia.* We feel at once a temperamental limitation: Xenophon cannot readily understand and report Socrates—unless the historic Socrates be indeed the somewhat delimited individual that he too often does report. For the Socrates of the *Memorabilia* is now and then a good deal of a Polonius, and, if Athens possessed a Socrates not unlike him, it is a wonder, says Schleiermacher, that she was not emptied of her burghers in a week. Again, those portions of the *Memorabilia* which some critics have pronounced interpolations others have shown to be precisely the most like Xenophon in his other writings.

But the temperamental is not the only limitation. Boswell and Eckermann were vastly

smaller than Johnson and Goethe; and, if Xenophon had had their objectivity and abnegation, he also might conceivably have builded better than he knew. A closer comparison of the *Memorabilia.* with his other dialogues has a little shaken my aggressive faith, expressed incidentally in a former book.[1] The *Hiero* with its interlocutors, Simonides of Ceos and the Tyrant of Syracuse, is obviously and openly a literary fiction; the *Economist* and the *Symposium,* Socratic dialogues, are likewise literary fiction,—if only because in the former Xenophon quotes Socrates upon the expedition of the Ten Thousand, and because in the latter the scene is laid in a time when Xenophon was scarcely nine years old. Yet they have much the same atmosphere of verisimilitude that has long been a stock-argument for the documentary value of the *Memorabilia.*

It has likewise been urged against the work that it is a *Tendenzschrift*—a party pamphlet designed to refute either the criminal findings of the dicasts, or the philosophic one-sidedness of other biographers; saying to the former that Socrates was a good man and great, to the latter that Socrates was not merely a dialecti-

[1] *The Poet of Galilee,* p. 8. B. W. Huebsch, New York.

cian; rather, a practical servant of his kind. In so far as this may be true, I do not see why the *Memorabilia* should be thrown out of court any more than *any* witness for the defense. Nevertheless, it puts us on our guard against exaggeration, and adds one more complication to the problem.

The Socratic writings of Plato have not always been entirely misunderstood. Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, II, 23) quotes Aristippus as remarking in answer to a saying of Plato, "Well, our friend Socrates never said anything of the sort." Diogenes Laertius (III, 35) repeats the anecdote that when Plato read the *Lysis* to him Socrates exclaimed, "What lies that youth has been making up about me!" We know that, if the Platonic Socrates is the real Socrates, Plato himself as an original thinker vanishes from the history of philosophy; for practically all the beautiful myths, all the flashes of intuition, all the sustained dialectic in the *Dialogues* come out of the mouth of Socrates. We recognize the dramatist, the unfolder of a system, the master of a studied utterance where the protagonist-Socrates is too clever and his adversaries rather too stupid and redeless for real life. There is no parallel in lit-

erature to the glorious impertinence of Plato in thus publicly masking great thought under a great name not his own. Even the independent Landor, in his *Imaginary Conversations*, tried to reproduce the point of view of his character.

Yet, as we think we get glimpses of the real man even in the perplexing pages of the prosaic Xenophon, so still more perhaps in the frank inventions of the poet-philosopher. As historically reliable, I believe, we may consider Plato (as indeed to some extent Xenophon) in (1) his references to Socrates's personal appearance and habits; in (2) some statements of a biographical significance, and (3) in the intellectual and moral character of the man. We would know from Aristophanes—whose relations to Socrates and to the sources for knowledge of Socrates I shall postpone to a later chapter—we would know also from the martyrdom to which he was publicly condemned that Socrates bulked large in the public eye. Plato could have had no purpose for dramatically misrepresenting his person, life, and character. It was indeed because the historic Socrates was so great that Plato chose him for the spokesman of his thought and the

hero of his drama. We know, moreover, how strikingly Plato's dramatic sketches of other historical figures coincide with what we learn about them elsewhere, as the brilliant and irresponsible Alcibiades and the grotesque mirth-maker Aristophanes in the *Symposium* —the same politician described by Thucydides and the same comic poet whose very words we may still hear. Again, wherever Plato and Xenophon are in close agreement, as in some sayings and in the story of the master's conduct at the trial and in prison, we—believe. Finally there may be mentioned that unconscious fusing of our impressions, that intuitive reconstruction in the imagination—a process which, though it be too subtle to trace, is not too subjective in a measure to trust.

Aristotle's references, scattered through the *Rhetoric*, the *Metaphysics*, and especially the three *Ethics*, touch only on the thought of Socrates. Their purport will concern us later. It remains here to note that, though he often cites "Socrates" by a kind of literary shorthand where he means the Platonic Socrates (as in his *Politics*, often the Socrates of the *Republic*), he had other Socratics besides his teacher of the Academy on whom to draw—

Antisthenes, Aristippus, Æschines—and that (at least according to Joël) he neither mentions Xenophon nor apparently uses him as source. His brief citations of Socrates, however much exaggerated in their philosophic implications by Joël, are too circumstantial, accord in thought too closely with the line of development among some Socratic schools, and bear out certain hints in Xenophon and Plato much too strikingly to be dismissed *in toto* as by Roeck.[1]

We pass from the book back to the city and the man.

[1] Taylor, in his work published after the present essay had been completed, elaborates with great acumen the thesis that Aristotle's knowledge of Socrates is entirely through Plato and the tradition of the Academy, and, as such, of vital importance.

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the old walls, from tombstones and temple-fragments, rose the larger ramparts of Themistocles. The fortification of the Piraeus followed: impregnable harbor for an impregnable city, in a few years to be united to the same by the long walls of Pericles. Athens could with safety house the stranger and repair her high places.

But she would do more. Under the admiral Aristides she formed, against possible danger from the east, the league of the Ægean islands and the Hellenic towns of the Asiatic coast. Under Cimon, son of Miltiades, she became in the boyhood of Socrates a maritime power. Meanwhile "ship-money" was pouring into the treasury at Delos. It belonged to the league. Pericles, statesman, patriot, imperialist, orator, controlled the Athenian assembly: "Let us build a more glorious Athens."

He bade rifle the treasury. He called to Ictinus and Phidias. Columns of costly Pentilic marble began to rise against the blue sky of Hellas on the Acropolis, and sculptured figures of ideal beauty took shape under a hundred chisels, one of which may well have been held by the hand of the father of Socrates. Hordes of slaves laid the stone steps of the

great portico that, from the base of the declivity just beyond the Agora and opposite the Areopagus, ascended the citadel. Between the Parthenon and the upper portals of the Propylaea now towered Athena Promachos, Athena Protectrix, colossal in bronze, the gilded tip of whose uplifted spear home-coming mariners saw from the sea.

And, in the vast Dionysiac theater, open to the heavens on the slope of the Acropolis farthest from the busy market-place, Æschylus, veteran of Marathon and Salamis, presented his *Oresteia* when Socrates was a boy of eleven. There too at thirty Socrates might have heard the singer of sweet Colonus and her child.

Then came the Peloponnesian war (431-404), the plague, the death of Pericles, the treachery of Alcibiades, the disaster of Syracuse, the defection of allies, the blockade of the Piraeus, the Spartan camp before the walls, famine, surrender, subjection. Then in 404 was established by the victor the rule of Critias and the Thirty Tyrants, whose expulsion by the patriot Thrasybulus and his train the next year left the city under a coarse and reactionary democracy, ineptly calling for a return to the stern virtues of the men of Marathon.

If there be anything to relieve the tragedy of the fall of this imperial city, it is that these same years gave to mankind the ripened wisdom and character of him who, in becoming her chief citizen, became for after-times a chief citizen of the world.

II.

But the eye will turn from artistic background and political turmoil to certain phases of the life and thought unfolding through these days of glory and change beneath the temple of the Goddess of Wisdom on the hill. For Athena Protectrix was not carried off by Sparta, nor melted into chains and fetters by the Thirty; and the inquiring intellect of the Athenian succumbed neither to luxury nor to civic disaster.

It was awake in the Agora, where, under the plane-trees or within neighboring porches and porticos, the citizen—whether in his busy hours he were an artisan in gold-work or ceramics, or importer of Pontic grain, or wine-merchant, or shipper at Piraeus, or banker, or physician, or farmsteader of Attica, or keeper of bees on Hymettus, or pilot, or soldier, or public official—still found leisure for friend and stranger and

for exchange of news and views. We of a colder zone, of a more secretive and sullen temper, and of a more competitive civilization, can scarcely grasp the educative function of the Agora, but unless we do we cannot understand Socrates.

This intellect was awake too in the social and political clubs, awake in that eminently Athenian institution, the dinner-party, where, with the circling of the mixed wine from guest to guest, the entertainment was furnished not only by dancing girls and flutists and jugglers, but by that witty and imaginative conversation of the banqueters which suggested to several Greek men of letters an effective setting for literary dialogue and has since made the word "symposium" synonymous with enlightened discussion; awake, again, in the playgrounds outside the walls, where the young men wrestled and ran—the familiar gymnasia, lyceum and academia, which, girt by colonnades and halls, became meeting-places for rhetoricians and sages, and shortly the seats of the greatest Greek schools of philosophy, still known by those names.

But nowhere, at least outside the tradition of Socrates himself, have we a more useful

hint of the level of the Athenian intellect than in the Dionysiac theater. I pass over as irrelevant here the creative originality that could invent the dramatic form, and the artistic imagination that wrought masterpiece after masterpiece. I pass also over the astonishing fact that any city could furnish year in and year out occupants for those thirty thousand seats as spectators for such exalted art. It is as another phase of Attic talk that the Greek drama concerns us here. Compared to the hurly-burly of *Lear* or the romance of events in *Romeo and Juliet*, there is no action. "All," says Grote, "is talk....debate, consultation, retort": talk, moreover, on human conduct, on right and wrong, and the purposes of gods, becoming, as we shall note more than once later, frank scepticism with Euripides.

The Athenian listened to others because he was interested in some new thing or thought; and when he spoke he desired to speak well, whether at symposium, or in law court, or in assembly. He had both the speculative interest in ideas, and the rhetorical interest in form and effect. These two interests had been immensely stimulated by the arrival in the city during the earlier and middle years of Socra-

tes of several teachers from the outlying Hellenic world, attracted professionally to the now maritime and thus cosmopolitan city, whose temper they understood and the opportunities among whose ambitious and curious youth they may well have surmised. They were in the main honest men, traveling professors of philosophy and rhetoric, independent of one another in conduct and opinion, and never, despite the sanction of modern usage, forming a school or cult. The Sicilian Gorgias of Leontini, who has given his name to a dialogue of Plato, came to Athens in 427, envoy of his native city (so close was then the relation between political activity and oratory), and the Athenians are said to have been captivated by his metaphors, parallelisms, antitheses, and other clever devices of style. He became the euphuist of the gilded youth. Protagoras, after whom another of Plato's dialogues is named, had come from Abdera. His interest was more in the (at that time new) problems of grammar and in argumentation. Like Gorgias, he served in the political world, being appointed by Pericles to draw up a code of laws for the new colony of Thurii (as the philosopher Locke was to do later for Carolina).

Such sophists instructed both in philosophy and in the arts of discourse. In the latter they aroused the hostility of the conservative by their attention to means and, as charged, by their indifference to ends, making for cleverness' sake the worse appear the better reason; in the former, by their scepticism, Protagoras indeed being compelled to flee on account of a pamphlet questioning the existence of the gods, which was burned in the market-place (411). They were always in bad repute because they took pay, so naive and spontaneous was the Athenian's notion of the dignity of the professional educator and of systematized instruction. Yet they were the humanists and encyclopedists of the fifth century, and Socrates himself is a greater sophist, as will appear in the brief exposition later of the philosophic antecedents of his method and ideas.

However, that the old religious beliefs are still living traditions at Athens during these years may scarcely be disputed. Anaxagoras is banished—because the sun *is* Phœbus Apollo, *not* a ball of fire. Alcibiades sets the town by the ears for mutilating the busts of Hermes and engaging in a mock celebration of the mysteries. Her envoys go to Delphi, the navel

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later, is to fill a book, the *De Divinatione*, with the grossest superstitions, not only chronicled, but very plausibly and energetically defended. Two thousand years are to follow in which millions in Christendom are to be good polytheists, with prayers and formulas for a Pantheon quite as complicated as that of Greece; years in which millions, not only in the uplands and on the heath, but in the great cities and centers of western culture, are to ring the temple bells in the thunderstorm against the witches, to read their fates by the aspects of the stars, to establish justice by red-hot iron, or to ward off diseases by uncanny specifics hung round the neck or carried in the pocket. And, if we can compass in imagination the whole human race, not only in its history but in its geography — watch the Buddhist cranking his prayer-mill, peep into the Indian's medicine-bag, hover on the outskirts of an African village during a ceremonial meal of human flesh, confront the Australian fleeing in breech-clout from the pointed stick of death, count the Carolina negroes of an August night on their knees in the fields beneath the shooting stars, or steam into an American metropolis at an hour when fifty churches are simultaneously

petitioning heaven for the conversion of a r
calcitrant mayor—we must have borne hom
to us that, to this very day, superstition i
one form or another—varying of course tc
in ethical content, but still from the point c
view of the emancipated intellect, superstitic
—is all but a universal factor in human thougl
and practice. The folk-mind of ancient Athe
reappears, as the folk-mind of the race, wi
gods and incantations and amulets differin
chiefly as to name, in London and Paris an
New York, though all the discoveries of sc
ence lie between. Down through time th
ancestral clan of the enlightened has been th
smallest organization on the planet.

Out in the southern Pacific, under the trop
of Capricorn, two thousand miles from Chi
and a thousand miles from hithermost Poly
nesia, far off the beaten route of steam an
sail, lies a small volcanic island, but a brow
dot on the blue and green map of the worl
It is the dwelling place of the dead idols c
men. Colossal heads of bleak black ston
quarried by a populous and awful race th
came no one knows whence, people its treele
slopes: some are still half carved in the pi
never to be fully born of the primordial rock

some lie cracked and prone in the upper brush; others have rolled down to the narrow beach where the incoming tides are wearing them away; but many are standing erect, fantastic, austere, their gigantic necks firmly imbedded in the tufa and talus, with wide grim lips compressed, and with sightless eyes staring vacantly through times of solstice and trade-wind out upon the eternal seas. It is the dwelling place of the dead idols of men. For the men are gone. And then only do the idols die.

Down through the years the ancestral clan of the enlightened has been the smallest organization on the planet. Yet its forefathers, as we have seen, were not unrepresented at Athens. But they were not exclusively among the sophists, metaphysicians, and physicists. Thucydides, born in the same ward of the city with Socrates, though no sceptic in morals and one who lamented the break-down of the old religion, was an out and out rationalist as historian. Human nature through its thousand manifestations in individuals and communities, not the gods, had produced the events he recorded and examined; and he took little interest in prophecies of oracles and signs. And, though not an Athenian, even Herodotus (for

all his proverbial credulity) had occasional rationalistic suspicions: those troubles in Thessaly were not due to Poseidon but to an earthquake, and the prophetic doves at Dodona were really only Egyptian priestesses. Euripides, influenced as he was by the rhetoric and philosophy of the sophists, represented his characters questioning the justice, even the existence, of the gods; and, as to life after death, that was matter of individual opinion, *le grand peut-être,* as Rabelais was to say many generations later, and, as to prophecy, "He who can reckon best is the best prophet"—just as God for Napoleon was on the side of the heaviest battalions. Euripides had not the Titanic energy of Æschylus, the thunderous, nor did he, like Sophocles, see life steadily and see it whole; yet he was a much more restless and inquiring mind, and threw out more questions than either—a fact which has, quite as much as his romantic sentiment, I believe, been a source of his greater popularity from the beginning. Critias in the extensive fragment of his drama *Sisyphus* (quoted by Roeck, pages 167-8) was a declared atheist—

"'Twas first some man
Who fooled his fellows into god-beliefs."

Aristophanes, however, who brought on the stage with such reckless irreverence the gods along with men, was as far from the sceptical spirit as the medieval inventors of the Mysteries who depicted God-Father clad in white gloves, and patriarchs of the Bible engaging in horse-play. The things were so sure that they could be handled with easy familiarity. A different matter altogether was Lucian's ridiculing burlesque several hundred years later.

Aristophanes, indeed, the *laudator temporis acti,* satirist of Euripides and the encyclopedists, is, perhaps, our best testimony to the persitence and importance of the conservative element which, unsusceptible of being reasoned away by modern scholarship as something entirely formal, furnishes environment and setting for those few radical minds that give the age its peculiar intellectual interest, as the age of enlightenment—the Athenian *Aufklärung.*

But the enlightenment brought its dangers; and the folk clung to the old gods and customs not simply because it was in all things very superstitious but perhaps quite as much because it had the instinct of moral self-preservation. We must remember that the absurdest superstitions may house the sturdiest ethics and the

most genuine religious feeling, and that the destruction of the former is too likely for a time to turn both the latter out of doors.

Into this world came Socrates.

THE SON OF SOPHRONISCUS.

I.

THE Athenian of whom I speak was born, according to tradition, a half-hour's walk from the walls of the city, in the deme, or precinct, Alopeke, birthplace too of Thucydides and of Aristides. Here amid olive- and fruit-trees, vegetable gardens and wayside plants, in view of Mount Hymettus, was the house of Sophroniscus, the artisan stone-cutter, and of his practical helpmeet Phaenarete, a midwife. Thus the parents were plain people, both earning their own bread at old racial occupations that combined cleverness of head and of hand; thus, also, it was the folk-stock, it was the common womb of humanity, out of which have issued so many of the powerful ones of the earth, that furnished the bone and brain of Socrates. The father seems to have lived only long enough to lead the child to the public sacrifices; the mother married again,

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We surmise he had the customary education in gymnastic and in music, which included, besides singing and dancing, the memorizing of much Homer and Hesiod. At eighteen he would become a citizen and take his turn in the militia on the Attic frontier, a service we can conceive him as performing in a more rollicking vein than Coleridge or any other philosopher ever condemned to the barracks. The tradition that he made a beginning at his father's profession is presumably reliable; but his reputed statue of the Three Graces on the Acropolis has yet to be unearthed. It is plausible, too, that by the time he had passed his majority he met and learned from the philosophers, a number of whom are represented either by ingenuous hearsay or dramatic propriety as having been formally or casually his teachers: Parmenides, the Eleatic; Zeno, the dialectician; Anaxagoras and Archelaus, the physicists; Protagoras, first of the sophists. These men were doubtless in Athens during the younger manhood of Socrates, and the air was full of talk on the physical sciences, just beginning to be differentiated, as well as on metaphysics, already split up into the two opposing world-views of the absolute and of

the relative. It is to the sophists, however, that he is in point of view and activity most closely allied; and with the sophists he presumably most frequently associated (as Jesus with the rabbis), before his years of maturest self-dependence.

II.

A chronological account of his career is impossible. We have a few dated events in the military and civil history of Athens, in which Socrates played a part; we have the performance of the *Clouds* in 423, and hints of his primary activity as teacher early and late, the most circumstantial, however, only when he was already an elderly man, surrounded by the Socratic circle.

He appears first in history at about the age of thirty-seven. But he is not at Athens; he is not teaching. Armed with the heavy shield and spear of a hoplite, a citizen-warrior in the early days of the Peloponnesian war, he is far northward in Chalcidice at the siege of Potidaea (432). The pictures given by Alcibiades in the *Symposium* of Plato are brilliant and well known; moreover, characteristic and significant in several ways. We see here for the

first time the shabby mantle and unsandalled feet. One scene is winter. The snow flakes gather in the folds of his single garment; the ice is under the bare heels. He goes his rounds; the other privates in the ranks bear it ill: "This fellow is airing his hardihood to shame us." Another scene is amid the confusion of battle. He is stalking toward us with a wounded soldier in his arms. It is Alcibiades, who a little time before in Athens seems to have attached himself to the philosopher, like Critias, to learn merely for selfish ambitions, not for truth. Had Socrates left him to die on the field, it would have been better for Athens. And thinking of how Alcibiades's subsequent conduct was to be urged against Socrates at the crisis, I was about to add—better for Socrates. But no; it is worth knowing that Socrates was brave as well as wise. The third scene changes to the Chalcidicean summer. Socrates stands somewhat apart from the tents in morning meditation. Nobody pays much attention; he is doubtless already notorious for queer ways both on the streets of Athens and here in camp. But noon comes; he is still there. And twilight—still there. This is a new thing. Word is passed around. The soldiers take their bed-

ding out and lie down to watch him. The stars rise and set — who is this that his thought should be more than food and drink and sleep? At last he salutes the golden sun and goes his way. This celebrated anecdote, making perhaps some allowance for exaggeration, we may well credit. It is too public in its setting to have been invented out of the whole cloth during the very lifetime of many veterans of the northern campaign; at least too unique in its portrayal of character to have been foisted upon any man whose nature would have rendered such extraordinary demeanor unlikely. We cannot but accept it as one of several illustrations of Plato's skill in utilizing for art the facts of life.

Socrates was twice again under arms, and at a time of life when not alone the philosophers prefer their own fireside: at Delium in 424, where his calm and resourceful conduct during retreat earned him the commendations of Alcibiades and the general Laches (in Plato); and at Amphipolis, in 422, where no one was present whose report has come down to us.

A number of years later, now an old man, we hear of him for the first time in civic affairs. Xenophon gives the facts in a para-

graph of simple narration, and Plato in the *Dialogues* represents his Socrates as playfully referring to them by the way. Matters so public we readily separate from literary fiction. The most circumstantial account, however, is in Plato's *Apology* (20) where I am ready to believe we can hear in the homely grandeur of the utterance not only the dramatic tribute of the disciple, but some echoes of the great voice itself.

"The only office of state which I ever held, O men of Athens, was that of senator; the tribe Antiochis, which is my tribe, had the presidency [Socrates himself being president for the day] at the trial of the generals who had not taken up the bodies of the slain after the battle of Arginusae [406, toward the close of the Peloponnesian war]; and you proposed to try them in a body, contrary to the law, as you all thought afterwards; but at the time I was the only one of the Prytanes who was opposed to the illegality, and I gave my vote against you [Socrates refused to put the matter to vote]; and when the orators threatened to impeach and arrest me, and you called and shouted, I made up my mind that I would run the risk, having law and justice with me, rather

than take part in your injustice because I feared imprisonment and death. This happened in the days of the democracy. But when the oligarchy of the Thirty was in power [404], they sent for me [Socrates being a well-known citizen] and four others into the rotunda, and bade us bring Leon the Salaminian from Salamis, as they wanted to put him to death. This was a specimen of the sort of commands which they were always giving with the view of implicating as many as possible in their crimes; and then I showed, not in word only but in deed, that, if I may be allowed to use such an expression, I cared not a straw for death, and that my great and only care was lest I should do an unrighteous or unholy thing. For the strong arm of that oppressive power did not frighten me into doing wrong; and when we came out of the rotunda, the other four went to Salamis and fetched Leon, but I went quietly home. For which I might have lost my life, had not the power of the Thirty shortly afterward come to an end. And many will witness to my words."

If there need be comment, let a Roman speak:

"Justum et tenacem propositi virum
Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
Non vultus instantis tyranni
Mente quatit solida"....

III.

Such data from military and civil chronicle nobly expand our conception of the versatile energies of Socrates, and by easily intelligible and concrete illustration bind him for our imagination close to the city of his birth and death. Yet they are but supplementary to the activities of the indefatigable intellect and tongue which for over a generation puzzled, amused, inspired, or irritated his fellow-citizens by services far different and altogether unparalleled. The distinctive chapter in his biography must report on the gad-fly of the Athenians.

"Socrates ever lived in the public eye; at early morning he was to be seen betaking himself to one of the promenades, or wrestling grounds; at noon he would appear with the gathering crowds in the market-place; and as day declined, wherever the largest throng might be encountered, talking for the most part, while any one who chose might stop and listen." So Xenophon (*Memorabilia*, I, 1).

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was already famous for the peculiar quality and activity which the oracular word is here accredited with having first awakened.

I have already suggested that the friendship with Alcibiades at Potidaea points to a discipleship before that time at Athens; nor would such a clever and well-to-do young aspirant of the gentility have allied himself to any teacher, least of all when he hoped to get training serviceable for his own career among men, unless that teacher were already a recognized authority. Critias, too, must have been in the master's company as a youth, many years before his open hostility to Socrates as leader of the Thirty. Plato is presumably nearer the historic situation in those dialogues representing him as a fairly young man in the analytic conversation of a trained thinker and teacher with wise heads who we know died long before Socrates. Morover, the *daimonion*, Socrates's warning voice, which is so intimately related to his teaching and his thought as to call for particular examination in a later chapter, is said to have manifested itself in his early years. But he was still in his intellectual and moral prime at seventy, eagerly attended by younger spirits, such as Xenophon,

Antisthenes, Aristippus, Euclides, and Plato, of the Socratic circle, who were all destined in one way or another to perpetuate his influence. We may safely assume that his most vital work began in the period of the Peloponnesian wars somewhat after the death of Pericles; and this, to recall some items of section II of the present chapter, lends peculiar unselfishness and dignity to the military service of a middle-aged man naturally so devoted to the quiet ways of wisdom.

A credible report represents him as acquainted with all sorts of people: philosophers, military leaders, the gilded or callow youth, free beauties, artists, artisans, and tradesfolk and shopkeepers, teaching or learning from all. Nor did he always wait for them to appear in the public places; he would look in at a shop to chat with some poor cobbler, or knock at the door of some wealthy friend who, he had just heard, was entertaining some good talker from abroad. Plato and Xenophon are here surely true at least to the democratic spirit of his conduct and the diverse classes to whom he was welcome.

His mode of life and personal appearance have been proverbial from the first. The bare

feet and sordid mantle of Potidaea are here, as nonchalantly mocking the bright painted marbles of the Acropolis and all the golden spoils of the doomed imperial city, as they had mocked the simple soldiery of the northern campaign. With grim humor, Antiphon, the sophist, advises him to dub himself professor of the art of wretchedness (Xenophon, *Memorabilia,* I, 6). Aristophanes in the *Birds* has his fling at this "unwashed guide of souls." Alcibiades in that wonderful eulogy in Plato's *Symposium* calls him Silenus-face, working out the analogy into a spiritual loveliness. And the Socrates of Xenophon's *Symposium* subjects his own physiognomy to ironic examination which leads to the conclusion that, if beauty be in adaptation to ends, then his own capacious mouth and nose and eyes render him the most beautiful of mankind. Without some such genial reflection as this, it must remain an outstanding paradox of Greek life that the race which so identified goodness and beauty as to fuse the very words into a single noun should have furnished the most glorious example of the quite comfortable existence of the one in separation from the other.

His habit of going barefoot is said to have

been imitated by his younger followers, Aristodemus and Chaerephon. Who it was that chiselled the kindly bust, familiar in the modern school-rooms of all the lands, I do not know, but the artist seems to have wrought honestly and well.

Socrates, however, could enjoy the creature comforts when they came in the beaten way of friendship, and, if the banquet of Plato's brush betrays indeed the wine and wisdom of the artist's own imaginings and the philosopher's own intuitions, its interest lies also in what it suggests of a very possible reality—for, as Emerson put it, to the bewilderment of a village audience, Plato was in the habit of grinding his friends into paint. At such times surely they such clusters had as made them nobly wild not mad, and yet as surely each word

"of thine
Outdid the meat, outdid the frolic wine."

In his own little dwelling outside of the town, things did not always go so merrily. Socrates's domestic affliction is one of the jests of time, and Xanthippe is a proverb. The sage took her shrewish temper like a sage; and, if she flung the dirty water on his head, that was,

he remarked, but the rain which must follow the thunder; and he would whisper to his friends that he had married her as a matter of self-discipline. She must, however, have come late into his life, since Aristophanes, who would scarcely have lost such an opportunity for burlesque, makes no mention of her and since she is represented as visiting her condemned husband in the prison, accompanied by two children only half-grown. But though the hopelessly unromantic case of the tempestuons and screaming Xanthippe certainly bears not the stamp of poetic legend, it suggests precisely that kind of contrast which makes capital anecdote for literature, and may well be an exaggeration of the uncomfortable, but not necessarily grotesque, circumstance, where a wife and mother finds her humble convenience too often unconsidered and her unreflecting patience tried by an abstracted companion supporting the home out of a small inheritance from his father and gifts from his friends, spending his rich leisure in the market-place, and bringing his philosophic cronies unexpectedly in to dinner.

IV.

Meantime there were those who began to

look askance: this Socrates is not only erratic, but meddlesome; not only meddlesome, but dangerous.

In 423, in the ninth year of the Peloponnesian war, and twenty-four years before his death, the son of Sophroniscus, now a man of forty-seven, saw himself ridiculed from the stage of the Dionysiac theater—the platform of Greece. The father of philosophy had fallen into the youthful and merciless hands of the greatest satirist and the greatest comic poet of the ancient world. Through the *Clouds*, Aristophanes, harking back, with that conservative spirit characteristic of satire, to

"The men who fought at Marathon"

in fine ethical nature-verse touched with the love of Athens, attacks in the person of Socrates atheistic doctrines of physicists, immoral instruction of sophists, and incidentally all unprofitable studies. The "Clouds" are the aery speculations which Socrates here calls his deities, giving him

"Fallacious cunning and intelligence."

He has thrown over the old gods—

"What Zeus?—nay jest not—there is none,"

and he has ready his "rationalistic" explana-

tion of thunder and rain. In Socrates's school (obviously an invention of the poet for dramatic convenience) they study how far fleas can leap, from which end of their bodies gnats sing, besides mysteries of astronomy, grammar, and versification. The same Chaerephon who is said to have brought back the oracle's response is here with other disciples, and all duly revere the wondrous sage. What is that?—asks the visiting rustic, bewildered, as Socrates, on his first entrance on the stage, floats into the chamber in a basket. *Autos,* is the solemn response—*autos,* "himself." But old Strepsiades has not come up from the country to learn the natural sciences or to join the disciples—or even to clean out the Corinthian bugs that infest the couches of the crazy place. He wants practical instruction how to evade by sophistic reasonings the creditors whom his extravagant son—a type of the smart and smug young sport of Athens—has brought buzzing round his ears. Socrates, finding him hopelessly stupid, has him fetch, as a likelier pupil, the son, Phidippides himself, and the old fellow soon "gets him back," as the sage had promised, "a dexterous sophist" indeed, who beats his sire, old fogy that he is, in a quarrel touch-

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has always been forgiven; and the personal jibe was the familiar custom in the old comedy. Moreover, though Aristophanes is certainly expressing a serious conviction, the spirit of mirth is here regnant over bitterness and spite. It is the large laughter of Dryden, not the stinging sneer of Pope. Nor could Socrates have realized, looking forward, as he must have come to realize, looking back in his last days (*Apology* of Plato) that the fun his unique habits of life and thought furnished the comic poets (for Eupolis[1] and others besides Aristophanes appropriated him) was sowing the seed from the mature plant of which the drops of poison would one day be distilled. This is not the only case on record, though the chief, where human laughter has ended in human tears. But assuredly Socrates left the comic poets to themselves: they worked their work, he his. About twenty years later, if we credit Xenophon (*Memorabilia*, I, 2), Critias, still nursing an old grudge against his quondam teacher for an ugly vice publicly rebuked,

[1] Eupolis seems to have been particularly sharp: in one fragment a character says, "I too hate this Socrates, the beggar of a twaddler"; and another fragment hints at criminal conduct (atheism?) and advises burning him in the cross-ways.

got the despicable Thirty of whom he was the leader, to pass a law "against teaching the art of words," aimed against Socrates. Shortly afterward, a caustic comment on their wholesale slaughter of the first citizens to the effect that "it was a sorry cowherd who would kill off his own cattle" caused him to be summoned before Critias and his fellow-member Charicles, and reminded peremptorily of the edict. Xenophon represents Socrates imperturbably and archly asking questions on its exact meaning and scope and just what he may talk about anyway, the dialogue concluding:

Charicles: "....But at the same time you had better have done with your shoemakers, carpenters, and coppersmiths. These must be pretty well trodden out at heel by this time, considering the circulation you have given them."—*Socrates*: "And am I to hold away from their attendant topics also—the just, the holy, and the like?"—*Charicles*: "Most assuredly, and from *cowherds* in particular; or else see that you do not lessen the number of the herd yourself."

We have already observed Socrates disobeying the Thirty at the risk of his life. Their hatred of him certainly had a deeper source

than the spite of their leader; they too worked their work, he his.

But for all their bloodshed, the execution of Socrates was to be reserved for others. Democracy, in one more effort to vindicate itself as the highest principle of government among mankind, has once more control in Athens, as we come to the one remaining date in Socrates's career that has been preserved for posterity.

We are in the year 399 before Christ. We see little groups talking in the street. We see an ever shifting crowd at the portico before the office of the second archon. Now a scholar with book-roll in the folds of his mantle, now an artisan with saw and square, now a farmer with a basket of fruit, now a pair of young dandies, with staffs in their hands and rings on their fingers, cross over and, having edged near enough for a look at the parchment hung up on the wall, go their ways, some with the heartlessness of jest or of pitying commonplaces, some with the sorrow and indignation of true hearts.

We see, also, an old man of seventy years coming down the step. He, too, has had a look, but from the whimsical wrinkles on his

cheek and brow we cannot make out what he thinks of it. A number of urchins follow after him hooting.[1]

It seems that Meletus, instigated by Anytus and Lycon, has done this thing; and on the parchment which he but this morning affixed in the portico are the following words:

"INDICTMENT.

"Socrates is guilty of crime: first for not worshiping the gods whom the city worships, but introducing new divinities of his own; next for corrupting the youth. Penalty: DEATH."

Tradition has it that Socrates had offended Anytus, a rich dealer in leather, by trying to dissuade him from bringing up his talented son in his father's profession, Anytus being, besides, a leading politician and one of the helpers of Thrasybulus in expelling Critias and the Thirty. But it would be a superficial reading of history to see in Anytus more than the unenviable symbol or spokesman of hostility that had been gathering head for over a generation, and the wonder is that it reserved its indictment so long. In no other city of the ancient world,

[1] These urchins, it need hardly be remarked, are not documented in our sources!

as Grote was presumably the first to point out, would there have been that long toleration of such individual dissent of opinion, taste, and behavior.[1] If Athens needed a Socrates, no less did a Socrates need an Athens; nor has history a parallel to such reciprocal opportunity between a citizen and his city. The forces that finally destroyed Socrates should not blind us to this.

Those forces may be speedily set down. There were the popular prejudices and vagrom misconceptions of the conservative or ignorant, gentlemen of the old school and nondescript proletariat, who saw in Socrates the father of the rascalities of Alcibiades and Critias, and the clever humbug of the stage of the Dionysiac theater. There was the personal resentment of no small number of influential men (if we make shrewd use of the hints in our source-books), whose pretensions had been exploded by the Socratic wit or mocked by the Socratic irony; and truth has ever been a nauseous drug in the belly of Sham, nor always a cure. Lycon, the rhetorician, and Meletus, the poet, may

[1] Yet one should recall with Benn (Chapter III) that even in Athens Anaxagoras and Protagoras, and later Plato and Aristotle, were annoyed, perhaps imperiled, by clashing with superstition and bigotry.

have been among them. There was, again, the democratic reaction at the turn of the century, dangerous to Socrates not only as giving free play to the forces named, but, like any defeated party again in power, as peculiarly suspicious of moral or political heresy. Socrates at this time (if not, as seems likely, also in early years) exercised his ethical influence chiefly on young men; and he was suspected of aristocratic sympathies, from the political character of some of his associates and from such not very dark sayings as that on the folly of electing ships' pilots by lot.[1]

Yet, so high his reputation for goodness and wisdom, so loyal and earnest his friends, that even now he might have escaped the worst, had it not been for his own lofty indifference. He seems as one driven to furnish to the after-times the logical conclusion of such a life:

> "Die wenigen, die von der Wahrheit was erkannt,
> Und thöricht genug ihr volles Herz nicht wahrten,
> Dem Pöbel ihr Gefühl, ihr Schauen offenbarten,
> Hat man von je gekreuzigt und verbrannt."

The orator Lysias is said to have offered

[1] Taylor believes that Socrates was associated with the "foreign" cult of the Pythagoreans, and that the charge of irreligion in the indictment refers to this: the point is new and well argued, but not, to my mind, conclusively established.

him a written speech, which he refused. His warning voice checked him, it is said, whenever he himself meditated what tactics to employ. And to a friend urging him to prepare a defense he is reported to have answered, "Do I not seem to have been preparing that my whole life long?" And so he continued "conversing and discussing everything rather than the pending suit," until the sun rose on the day of the trial.

The dicasts are assembled, some five hundred citizen judges over thirty years of age, ultimately owing their positions merely to the chance of choice by lot—a supreme court of idlers, artisans, and everybodies. The accusers speak: they reiterate the old charges: Men of Athens, behold the infidel, behold the corrupter of your sons. Socrates, rising, disdains the customary appeals for clemency, which even Pericles is said to have stooped to when Aspasia had been indicted before the dicastery for impiety: not merely because such whimpering is contrary to the laws—but because it is contrary to Socrates. He reviews his life. He is eloquent, uncompromising, unperturbed. The vote is taken on the question of guilt, and the verdict is against him by an encouragingly

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....“Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know of a certainty that no evil can befall a good man whether he be alive or dead.”...“But the hour of departure is at hand, and we go our ways—I to die, you to live; but which of us unto the better affair remains hid from all save the Divine (τῷ Θεῷ).”[1]

Such are the hints from Plato's *Apology*, a document which, as I have indicated before, though it can no longer be accepted as stenography, must never lose in men's eyes its essential value as the most eminent disciple's testimony to the extraordinary character of his master's conduct and speech on that impressive occasion—for here Plato is putting forth no one of his own peculiar doctrines, and here, if anywhere, piety would tip his pen once and again with the recollected word and cadence. His witness is borne out by the lesser disciple; and Xenophon says (*Memorabilia*, IV, 8)[2] that the defense was “happy in its truthfulness, its freedom, its rectitude”; and that “he bore the sentence of condemnation with infinite gentleness and manliness.” There exists no tradi-

[1] I have taken the liberty of altering Jowett's rendering of the last sentence.

[2] But he may be getting his information mainly from the *Apology*. He was not present, as was Plato.

tion or assertion to the contrary; and Cicero (*De Oratore,* I, 54) long ago phrased what is likely to remain the permanent judgment of mankind: "*Socrates ita in judicio capitis pro se ipse dixit, ut non supplex aut reus, sed magister aut dominus videretur esse judicum*"—"he spoke not as suppliant or defendant but as master and lord of his judges."

He lay a month in prison; for it was "the holy season of the mission to Delos." Phaedo explains the circumstance to Echecrates at Phlius: "The stern of the ship which the Athenians send to Delos happened to have been crowned on the day before he was tried.... the ship in which, according to Athenian tradition, Theseus went to Crete when he took with him the fourteen youths, and was the saviour of them and himself. And they are said to have vowed to Apollo at the time that, if they were saved, they would send a yearly mission to Delos....Now....the whole period of the voyage is a holy season, during which the city is not allowed to be polluted by public executions...." Let the irony of the situation be remarked without bitterness or rhetoric: the imaginative but fatuous city punctiliously guarding against a formal and meaningless

blasphemy only to blaspheme against truth by slaying its prophet.

He spent these days in conversation with the Socratic circle. Means of escape to foreign parts seem to have been arranged for by his friends, which, as all the generations know, he firmly declined, though men begin to doubt if his reasons as given in the *Crito* be not primarily Platonic. He would not disobey the laws, but more than that he would not and he could not, by a kind of cowardice which would have ever after thrown its shadow back upon seventy brave years of loyalty to himself, violate the logic of his being. "Socrates did well to die," said Shelley, speaking for all of us; and martyrdom was not the least part of his mission to men.

The last day is the subject of the *Phaedo*. There is a sublime beauty and justice in Plato's electing this solemn time for putting into the mouth of Socrates his own doctrines of immortality, though metempsychosis and the ideas were very far from the simple "perhaps" and the ethical trust of the more historic Socrates in the *Apology*. But, when the argument is over, the realism of art seems to draw close to that of poignant and immediate fact. Socrates

has bathed to save trouble for those who would have to care for the corpse, and dismissed poor Xanthippe and the children "that they might not misbehave" at the crisis. The jailer appears —"Be not angry with me. . . . you know my errand." Then, bursting into tears, he turns away and goes out, as the condemned answers his good wishes and farewells. The sun sets behind the hill-tops, visible possibly from the prison windows. "Raising the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drinks off the poison." The friends weep and cry out; it is Socrates, with the venom working through the stiffening limbs up to the old heart, who comforts and consoles them. Now he has lain down and covered himself over. Perhaps the sobs are hushed in the strain of the ultimate suspense. He throws back the sheet from his face: "Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?" These, adds Plato, were his last words, the paganism of which so distressed his admirers in the early Christian church, who failed to see their playful and pathetic gratitude to the god of health who has now—cured him of all earthly ills.

Were the people of the planet, wearied with erecting statues of the admirals and cavaliers,

to set up in some city, more enlightened than the rest, a memorial to this hero of their ancestral stock, they should cause to be carved upon one oblong of the base, beside honest sayings of the sage's own upon the other three: "*No one within the memory of men ever bowed his head more beautifully to Death.*" The judgment was true when Xenophon wrote it down; and it were to-day far more true than most that is graven in bronze or stone.

THE SHINKER.

I.

EVERY exposition of Greek thought, from the most pedantic to the most popular, has been divided into the two chapters, "Before Socrates," "After Socrates"; between which has stood a third, devoted to Socrates himself. Though he published no book in prose or verse, no philosophic hexameters on nature, no dialectic treatise on the Absolute, no criticism on ethics, politics, or the divinities that shape or refuse to shape the ends of man, his centrality to the development of speculation, as the mind which, while itself indifferent to the activities of its predecessors, brought to light other principles not only directive for thought in hitherto uncharted realms, but essential for any rational solution of those problems already broached, has been until very recently beyond all dispute, and will always in any case challenge disproof. And the impor-

tance of his practical wisdom for the unwritten history of conduct is presumably quite as great. Thus we are now face to face with one of the five or six most impressive and vital questions in the history of intelligence (as opposed to the history of human vanities and insanities—the rise and fall of dynasties and the interminable slaughters on land and sea): just what did this man stand for who lived so long ago under the hill temple-crowned, in the market-place girded by porticoes, within the walls against which even then the hostile armies were more than once encamped?

The question is difficult not alone because it is so much larger than every writer who would answer it; but because it is just here that our sources are so difficult and confusing. Biographical reports, when uncontaminated by miraculous elements or by suspicion of rhetorical purpose or partisanship, when squaring with the public customs and affairs of the times, and finally, when tending toward a consistent portrayal of character and conduct, we may trust, in default of any contrary evidence. Allowing for some possible ambiguities of imperfect expression, I suppose no scholar would seriously quarrel with the statements of the

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The histories of philosophy, despite the imposing names on their title pages, mislead us (to borrow the language of Frau Academia) with the specious clarity of a rationalizing schematismus. Here just what Socrates repudiated and contributed is numbered and sectioned and paragraphed with that illuminating precision which facilitates preparation for the final examination. The studies of Grote and of Zeller, based upon a wide erudition and developed with a philosophic grasp it were pedantry to commend, convey also a misleading impression of certainty, which the contradictory results of the German scholarship of the last twenty years (of Doering with his Xenophontic Socrates, of Joël who clings to Aristotle, of Roeck who picks his data from portions of Xenophon and from much indirect and elusive testimony in the attitude of contemporaries or in the comment of tradition) tend to destroy, without, however, furnishing any constructive substitution in which we can feel full confidence. The new critics confuse while they help[1]; and the day has gone by when even a popular essayist can content himself

[1] And a year after this was written, Taylor published his *Varia Socratica* (see note in bibliography).

with compiling from the old. Tentatively and modestly I will set down my own opinions, which, I suppose, will differ from those of better men in lacking the organization and definitiveness that, though much to be desired, it is impossible for me with intellectual honesty to reach.

II.

What thought had been busied with before Socrates is, from the point of view of its dynamic contributions, far more important in the case of Plato in whom unite elements of the Eleatic, the Heraclitic, and the Pythagorean speculation, than in the case of his master, who is notorious for his break with the past. From the point of view of a crisis in the human intellect, however, it is necessary to make some mention of that thought here. A few words, then, with the emphasis on antecedents rather than on influence.

During a generation or two preceding Socrates, in the sea-washed colonies to east and west had developed a number of theories of universal nature, as free and large and intangible as the starry heavens and salt winds about them. The search for the universal

explanation of things which had begun in the naive materialistic monisms of the Milesians, Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximines, as deductions from the apparent omnipresence of water or the atmospheric indefinite, turned, with that sudden acceleration which characterized Greek progress everywhere in the fifth century, very shortly to rational analysis of concept and sense-impression of the phenomenal world. The Eleatics of Magna Graecia, holding the primacy of reason over sense, discovered the antinomies which forced them to deny reality to change and plurality; the first of metaphysicians, they proclaimed the absolute and pointed a way to scepticism. The great Ephesian, though positing like the physicists of Miletus, a material principle, fire, as the substratum of the multitudinous visible universe, is chiefly notable for paradoxes, as analytically derived as those of the Eleatics, which forced him to deny ultimate and permanent reality to anything but the Logos, the law of change itself, and to affirm relativity, the absolute instability of all things, as the inherent logical implication of being—pleasure conditioned by pain, life by death, thesis by anti-thesis. In the eternal flux there can be no certainty of

truth, and Heraclitus, too, points a way to scepticism.

Pythagoreanism, coming after all pretty close to the intellectual basis of the world-ground in its doctrine of numbers, however fantastically applied and involved in that hocus-pocus which so often has accompanied primitive mathematics, is an esoteric cult of religious mystics with liturgy and rites.

Empedocles of Agrigentum, imagining a cosmogony almost as mythical and arbitrary as that of Hesiod, yet peopling creation with eternal substances (earth, air, fire, and water) and eternal principles of cosmic energy (attraction and repulsion), is, from our point of view to-day, physicist rather than philosopher.[1] So too chiefly Anaxagoras of Athens, as far as we can judge, who taught infinite atoms and a universal mind-stuff.

Contemporary with Socrates, off at Abdera in Thrace, Democritus was teaching in numerous books now lost a mechanism of nature—atoms, motion, and the void—which, with modifications and extensions and a more elab-

[1] See *The Fragments of Empedocles*, by William Ellery Leonard, Open Court Publishing Co., Chicago.

orate terminology, is the physics and chemistry of to-day—or at least of yesterday.

These courageous efforts to master experience were all primarily directed outward. The challenge came from the majesty and mystery of the external universe. But in meeting it thought soon became conscious of its own mystery, and man himself became part of the problem. In the irremediable flux of Heraclitus and the cold atomism of Democritus men's minds tend to vanish into mere sensations differing for each: truth is as multiple as humanity; there is no universal principle of knowledge or thinking or conduct; man is the measure of all things. So Protagoras, the sophist. Meantime the later Eleatic, the sophist Gorgias, perhaps in half-jest, has pushed the dialectic reasoning of the school to the negation of being itself.

The path is open to absolute scepticism. The exploration of reason is ending in unreason. Speculation has thus far approached man from without; and that way madness lies. It must make a new start,—with man himself, man in his humble activities and daily round, irrespective of atoms clashing in the void and theories clashing in the brain. The philo-

sophic implications in the simple mental life of an Athenian cobbler or saddler or armor-smith may bring us back to some conviction of permanence and certainty in thought. Thereafter it will be time enough to look again at the cosmos. Socrates, beginning and ending with man, ultimately saves Greek philosophy from self-slaughter. It is not for nothing that he is an Athenian.

But it is easy to present the situation too academically. Scepticism is troubling a few speculative heads. Their notions are abroad in Athens, imported over seas in parchment-rolls, well boxed from the damp salt air, or stalking the streets on the lips of the traveling professors. They are affecting not only the intellects of the abstracted, but doubtless the moral conduct of some of the active young men; but that Socrates in his new direction was consciously phrasing a philosophic task, or by saving philosophy was saving mankind, are propositions which distort both the larger mission of the sage and the relatively secondary importance of technically philosophic systems for the public health. From Socrates, as must be noted later, most subsequent Greek schools seem directly or indirectly to derive.

But he was not aiming to reform philosophy. Nor could his re-formation of philosophy be a revolution—except in philosophy, a fairly negligible phase of human progress, if we take into account the few in any age who mull over its puzzles. No, Socrates's interest was in men and his aim to reform men; and, though he doubtless checkmated philosophic nihilism in more than one aggressive young dupe, he awoke to a sense of their ignorance and their heritage in the laws of the spirit many more, less sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought than ailing from moral lethargy.

It is easy in another matter to misrepresent the situation. It is not as if philosophy and morals came to a standstill, say about 440, to await help from Socrates. Historians distort the chronology. Gorgias, Protagoras, and Anaxagoras were teaching in Athens long after that date, and scepticism itself may not have been full blown when Socrates began his public work. Direct evidence is lacking, but there is plausibility in the conjecture that his first conversations antedated even the first appearance of the sophists. Gorgias, for example, came to Athens in 427, only five years before Socrates was lampooned in the *Clouds*.

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current and unfortunate association. But none except Socrates made truth and righteousness the be-all and the end-all. A greater sophist, also, it need not be added, because a greater intellect and a greater personality.

And now, if with a little more imagination than poor Wagner, the student has begun

"Sich in den Geist der Zeiten zu versetzen,"

let him attempt

"Zu schauen, wie vor uns ein weiser Mann gedacht."

III.

The thought of Socrates is implicit in his method. He was not a formal lecturer, as other sophists doubtless were at times, and as Plato and Aristotle were later. He talked, as all Athens was talking; he asked questions, and applied the answers to the business of further questions, as men had done before and have done ever since. He utilized on occasion the keener procedure of the disciplined mind, the dialectic which, applied earlier by Zeno the Eleatic to abstract matter and motion, etc., it was now the sophists' service to apply to human conduct—a dialéctic which, as developed in the law-courts, was used *against* the examinee to ferret out his crime, but by Socrates

for the examinee to ferret out his intellectual error. He shared, I repeat, his cross-examining method of instruction with the sophists, just as Jesus shared his parabolic instruction with the rabbis. But like Jesus, by a powerful originality he made a common device so much his own that we now connect it only with him.

Aristophanes, as we have seen, represents him as formally teaching his method, but this appears to be a wilful or reckless identification of Socrates with his fellow sophists who we know imparted the art of clever reasoning as a practical instrument, whereas Socrates, according to all other traditions, used it to impart truths beyond itself, teaching method merely by showing it in operation.

"He conducted discussion by proceeding step by step from one point of general agreement to another" (*Memorabilia,* IV. 6), and "by shredding off all superficial qualities laid bare the kernel of the matter" (*Memorabilia,* III, 2). He begins with the point of view of his interlocutor or opponent and, with an irony kindly or irritating according to circumstances and with frequent use of homely illustrations, leads him on inductively to one admission

after another, until that interlocutor or opponent sees the implication in his own thought, that is, until he is face to face with himself as the unwitting possessor of a particular truth. Each man has within him truth, though as yet foetal and powerless to be born; Socrates comes calling himself the midwife. This was presumably his interpretation of the Delphic adage, "know thyself"; and, far from proud of his midwifery, he was "eager to cultivate a spirit of independence in others" (*Memorabilia,* IV, 7). He bored deeper into the strata of thought than the other sophists, and knew better its hidden caverns and springs; and, more than they, tapped it for living waters. The *intellectus sibi permissus,* "the intellect left to itself,"—the phrase is Bacon's,—the spontaneous reason of haphazard man he strove to make conscious and self-directive. His aim implied confidence in universals of the truth of which each individual partook, as well as confidence in human nature capable of self-salvation.

All our sources indicate that Socrates was unweary in his inquiries for the τί ἐστι, the What, the essential meaning of a thing. In Xenophon he appears discriminating, defining.

The Platonic figure is presumably dramatically true to his intellectual attitude. The nub of the satire of the *Clouds* is rationalizing fanaticism corrupting the youth. And Aristotle says in a famous passage (*Metaphysics*, I, 6, 3) that has caused a deal of trouble: "Socrates discovered inductive discourse and the definition of general terms," in contrast, as the modern critics point out, to the mere grammatical distinctions of the sophists. But our critics have certainly exaggerated what were for Socrates simply short formularies of the factors to be examined, not logic-proof concepts of abstract philosophy. Socrates was not a *Begriffsphilosoph* and would have enjoyed the practical joke of Diogenes (of the school of Antisthenes, a disciple of the midwife), who, hearing (as the story goes) of Plato's definition of *homo sapiens* as a featherless biped, plucked a rooster and carried it over to the Academy as an example of Plato's "man."

IV.

But these short formularies of the factors to be examined were of prime importance. Socrates emphasized the rational, the cognitive, aspect of virtue, as no other teacher: τὰς γὰρ

ἀρετὰς ἐπιστήμας ἐποίει—"He made the virtues knowledges" (Aristotle, *Magna Moralia*, I, 1), and since our first historian of philosophy recurs to the theory at length a dozen times (in all three *Ethics*), to explain and refute it, with that modernity and subtilty that forever astonishes us in

"Il maestro di color che sanno,"

we must accept it as true at least to one side of Socrates's thought. Virtue is knowledge. In a sense: "To be pious is to *know* what is due to the gods; to be just is to *know* what is due to men; to be courageous is to *know* what is to be feared and what is not; to be temperate is to *know* how to use what is good and avoid what is evil" (*Encycl. Brit.*).

Various comments difficult to organize crowd upon us for expression. What of this dynamic relation between right thinking and right conduct, between ignorance and evil? How did Socrates arrive at the idea? How far did he admit its modification by other factors in human nature? Has it an element of truth?

The idea, in the first place, were a witness to the character of Socrates, whom a noble serenity of reason dominated like an irrefragable

god. It were, too, an idea typically Ionic, Athenian, sprung from that stock which stressed the λόγος of life, even as the ideal of the Doric (Sparta) was the ἐγκράτεια, the ἔργα (deeds).

Socrates saw the actual identity of knowing and being in the theoretical sciences: to know geometry is to be a geometer. He may not have appreciated the difference of aim in the practical arts. He may have said that to know medicine is to be a physician, and thus have construed conduct itself as the science-art of life, so that knowing virtue was the same as being virtuous, and he may not have sufficiently perceived that the aim of every theoretic science is included *within* that science, while the aim of every practical art is some good *beyond* that art itself.

However, I do not care to push the Aristotelian critique further, as my imagination is haunted by an all but inscrutable chuckle of Socrates that yet seems to say: "This great man's subtilty and system takes the old beggar too solemnly. And I didn't reckon in the irrational part of the soul (ἄλογον μέρος ψυχῆς)? And the will being in my view subservient to thought, the result is determinism? And was

the market-place, then, such a poorly equipped laboratory that my researches left me so ignorant of the twists and starts and explosions of human nature? And will he deny the larger implications for systematic thought (if he must make me a system) which may be read out of my dealings with men?"

Granted that Socrates in speech and practice proceeded from the proposition to know is to be, applied specifically to conduct; granted that like every new and great thought, like the Copernican astronomy, like Biblical criticism, it was at first formulated too absolutely; granted that Socrates was not a theoretic psychologist and that indeed the psychology of the will and the emotions was not very extensively developed even till long after Aristotle; granted that life is forever in advance of all speculation upon it and that the first serious speculations on morals may as such have been an inadequate or inconsistent phrasing of impulses, motives, and ethical stimulus obvious even in the veriest honey-smeared brat screaming under his mother's sandal in an Athenian alley-way: it is yet impossible to square the thought and service of Socrates entirely with Aristotle's report; it is yet impossible to iden-

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balanced soul." Self-control, balance, poise, is the cardinal Socratic virtue. When present, moral insight is moral conduct. But more than that, its presence is practically identical with moral insight as well. "Between wisdom and balance of soul he drew no distinction"—*σοφίαν καὶ σωφροσύνην οὐ διώριζεν* (*Memorabilia,* III, 9)—is Xenophon's comment, and not too much stress is to be laid on the fact that his word is *σοφία* (wisdom), not *ἐπιστήμη* (knowledge). And in a neighboring passage, "He said that justice, moreover, and all other virtue is wisdom."

Is, then, complete insight itself possible without this balance? If we take Xenophon absolutely, apparently not. Wrong conduct is either blindness or madness, i. e., either failure of insight or lack of soul balance; but these are practically two aspects of the same thing. Balance of soul, insight, right conduct, is the Socratic manhood, the not entirely mysterious three-in-one of this pagan anthropologist.

But what of the avowed situation of Ovid's *Medea,* and of so many others less damned to fame—

"Video meliora, proboque:
Deteriora sequor"?

Would Socrates have denied the major?—Presumably he would first have questioned it; but often enough he was face to face with gifted men, like Alcibiades, who knew right and did wrong, with intelligent but vicious humanity where the cure, if any, could not be alone merely more intellectuality. He believed in training soul and body to self-mastery, not only as right conduct in itself but as the prerequisite for right thinking and right conduct (cf. *Memorabilia,* IV, 5). This is patent to any one who reads between the lines of our sources, and has perceived that Socrates's identification of different factors, is, if anything more than an insistence on the primary importance of moral cognition, but an immortal hyperbole of an original mind, not busied with a formal system, and not bothered by its inconsistencies, as when perhaps he said "courageous men are those who have knowledge to cope with terrors and dangers well and nobly," the adverbs seeming to imply the recognition of traits of character antecedent to the knowledge.

He recognized, though he may never have formulated, back of self-control, insight, and conduct, the facts of temperament and environ-

ment, without wavering in practice from his belief in the relative teachability of virtue analogous to the teaching of a trade or art. He does not, however, seem to have valued over-much teaching through the emotions. There are hints that he more than once stirred the emulous heart by noble examples cited, but the oft mentioned enthusiasm of his listeners was roused usually either by his sweet reasonableness or the unplanned and unmeditated effect of his own brave and kindly personality. Of the blazing passion, in plea or threat, of Mohammed and the Hebrew prophets, or of the austere yet plangent appeal of the loving Jesus there is not a trace. There are many different voices for the schooling of man.

The new pedagogy stands quite across the world from where Socrates stood. With its experiments on the ethical emotions of cats and dogs, its statistics of innocent nursery prayers and depravities, its questionnaires on the moral agitations at puberty, and its roll-calls of public pensioners in Sing Sing or Fort Leavenworth, it has all but demonstrated the negligibility of knowing as a factor in virtue. And the parlor-philosopher, calling Sunday afternoon, shakes his head and assures me

there is no connection between education and morality. Sad. And true, possibly, if by knowing we mean knowing mathematics and by education education in linguistics or the new pedagogy; verbiage, if we mean knowing moral values. The intellectual is still fundamental, and great character is still impossible without just thought as a big block in the underpinning. Meantime the common sense of mankind is rather with Socrates at bottom than with the new pedagogy, unconsciously testifying something of its unshaken viewpoint in countless familiar turns of speech: "*Know* the right and do it;" "You ought to *know* better;" "Poor fellow, he didn't *know* how disgraceful his actions were;" "What could you expect from a man who never had a chance to *know* the ideals of good citizenship;" "You're wrong, can't you *see* it?" etc., etc., all of which adumbrate the cognitive (without psychologizing it away from the imagination) and neglect the emotional altogether, as dynamic for conduct.

Kant founded the moral life in the good will; Socrates in right thinking. Yet each implies the factor made paramount by the other: Kant says act so that the maxim of thy

conduct is fit to become universal law and implies the rationalizing, generalizing, judging, knowing mind; Socrates says a man without self-control is little better than the beasts, and implies that energy of soul to which modern psychology gives the name will. A worthy moral life is impossible without both, but the romantic ethical tendencies of to-day need the propaedeutic of Socrates more than of Kant. The good will we have always with us, giving often enough, with ghastly best wishes, unwittingly a serpent for a fish and a stone for bread; but the intelligence to see the practical bearings of conduct and to discriminate between higher and lower ideals is too often lacking—to the dwarfing of the individual and to the confusion of society. The fool in Sill's poem (which goes deep) prayed not for the good will, but for wisdom; and therefore the less fool he.

Socrates associated ἀρετή, "virtue," with some further ideas more prominent in his thought than would be presumed from the brief mention that can here be made of them.

He was, I believe, an incorrigible utilitarian. The measure of any thing's worth was to him in its adaptation to use. But after all, the

crux is in the content of use; and Socrates recognized only noble uses. Reason as we will, we cannot reason away his implicit idealism: such and such conduct is useful—for what—for making you useful to the state, a brave soldier? for making you worth while to yourself, self-respecting? "But what's the use?" We cannot go far without standing before the mystery of the approving or condemning moral consciousness itself. Socrates appears never to have thought the matter out; nor need we just here. In spite of his rationalistic bent, he accepted as instinctively as most men the obligation to the ideal.

He preached companionship; and boasted himself to be both lover and the pander too. "I am an adept in love's lore"....the disciples "will not suffer me day or night to leave them, forever studying to learn love-charms and incantations at my lips." These words are found not in Plato's *Symposium*, but in the prosaic narrative of Xenophon, whose placidity in assuring us in another passage that "all the while it was obvious the going forth of his soul was not toward excellence of body in the bloom of beauty, but rather toward faculties of the soul unfolding in virtue," is a good indication

that we have here an element of the historic Socrates. But friendship was founded on character: "In whatsoever you desire to be esteemed good, endeavor to be good" (*Memorabilia*, II, 6); to be a good friend, you must be a good man. Love was also fellow-service: the good friend tried to make his friend better. On the other hand, it was useful to acquire friends—they were the best possessions. The politic utilitarian peeps out again. But useful for what?—for the cult of generous helpers, for the freemasons of the Good. We come round again and again to the center of the Socratic utilitarianism which measured finally the useful things in the moral realm by their usefulness for the ideal manhood. The term has here little in common with its force in modern philosophy, though modern utilitarians have been too ready to exclaim, "Lo, he has become as one of us."

Socrates would not have been a Greek if his ethics had not had a social and political reference. Ideal manhood and ideal citizenship would have been for practical teaching one thing to him. He would have been hugely impressed with the adroit patience and clever tinkering amid loneliness and deprivation of

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so prominent in Socrates, though its absolute sense of simple efficiency doubtless tended in his thinking to specious analogies. Our word "good" offers a modern parallel, both in its double sense and in its sometimes ambiguous and misleading use in thought.

Socrates would not have been a Greek if he had not emphasized the sanctity of the sovereign laws as a guiding principle of conduct. The Greeks often spoke as if the state were the end of man; that is, as if man received his justification only in so far as he contributed to its perfection. That a state is but the wise communal means to opportunity, variety, unfoldment, manhood, of the only earthly reality that counts, individual human beings, is scarcely the point of departure of Plato's *Republic* or even of Aristotle's *Politics*, but is the result of a long development in political science, fascinating, but irrelevant here. Just how far Socrates failed to see it as we do, we have no certain knowledge. It is, however, on several grounds, to be confidently presumed that he derived the sanction of the civil law from justice, and not as is often declared, justice from the law. In the corrupt and shifting politics of Athens there were laws which he

condemned and deliberately disobeyed in the interests of higher laws. And he would have taken courageously by the arm the Sophoclean Antigone, as she determined to bury her brother Polyneices in spite of the state decree, and have said, "Thou art right, my child; indeed,

> "'The life of these laws is not of to-day,
> Or yesterday; but from all time, and, lo,
> Knoweth no man when first they were
> put forth.'"

V.

That Socrates conceived the laws of right thinking and doing as organic and not statutory, as not imposed from without but as implicated in the nature of the organism and as universal as man, seems clear from the general tendency and headway of his teachings. A ship may tack more than once in its course, but we measure the meaning and purpose of the voyage correctly only when we have checked up the casual deviations in a more comprehensive cartography. His conception of virtue has the transcendental implication; it roots in a beyond; conceptually, in the universality of

the ideal; categorically, in his naive and unexamined assumption of man's sense of obligation to the ideal when discovered.

This is the thoroughfare from ethics to religion. When the soul, finally conscious of that transcendental implication (though it be named more simply, or named not at all), is awake with rejoicing or dismay to the realization that virtue streams ultimately from the shining foreheads of the gods, it seems inevitably to reach out with trust or prayer. Nor is the essential attitude altered if for his baffled spirit the Divine Singular or Plural merges into the Infinite Mystery that rebukes our petty vocabularies. There is no other highway. The philosophic reason that, examining the transcendental bearings of logic and nature, arrives at a world-ground, arrives only at the intellectual last, at the speculative satisfaction, which, though it may bulwark religion, can scarcely compel it. The feeling of physical helplessness or dependence or terror, the suggestion of spirit-things from dream or hallucination, or eery winds or nodding tree, may issue in beliefs with incantations and petitions and burnt offerings, reachings out to a Superior or a Host, but this is religion only in the

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initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries at that time newly popular, his apologists would have risen forthwith against the dicasts. Plato's *Apology* practically dodged this charge of the indictment. Aristophanes, years before, had formulated it, and we cannot any longer throw Aristophanes peremptorily out of court as a mere irresponsible buffoon in an ugly temper. Satire makes no appeal unless it phrases a common belief: there would be nothing fetching about a satire on Roosevelt as an atheist, or on Emerson as a hunter and rough-rider, except as a cheaply comic inversion of well-known habits and traits, and Aristophanes was hardly perpetrating that sort of jest. His satire on the sordidness of the schoolhouse was founded on the fact of the poor and mean estate of Socrates's person; his satire on the Socratic speculations was founded in the fact of Socrates's perpetual rationalizing; his satire on the corruption of youth on the fact of Socrates's influencing young men to think new thoughts unprescribed by the elders; and his satire on Socrates's irreligion must likewise have been founded on fact — misunderstood fact, possibly, but fact misunderstood only as most of Athens may have misunderstood it. The

Socrates of Plato, perhaps, helps us little; but it is to be observed that his remarks on dreams, oracles, and the gods have an elusive playfulness or poetry, pointing, if pointing at all beyond Plato, to a mind rather mischievously at ease in Zion, but not hostile to contemporary beliefs only because so far above them; and that his beautiful prayer to "Pan and ye other gods who frequent this spot" asks, quite contrary to popular petition, "in the first place to be good within"; and that the nearer Plato's Socrates seems to approach historic reality the more his religious allusions approach the indefinite "Divine," and the more eloquent is the expression of the moral law. The movement of thought with which Socrates was most nearly associated was away from the folk religion. Socrates was so much with Euripides, the infidel poet of the Enlightenment, that rumor accused him of dramatic collaboration. The chorus at the end of the *Frogs*—a satire on that poet—sings with meaning: "Hail to him who [unlike Euripides] neither keeps company nor gossips with Socrates." And, again, the keen intelligence of Socrates, as we have tried to analyze him, consorts awkwardly with the popular Olympians.

Against all this, we have the explicit testimony of the *Memorabilia*: Socrates was the most orthodox son of the state religion; the pillar and deacon of the church; the ambling odor of sanctity, now closeted with this priest, now with that, running about from altar to altar with incense and winecup or telling his beads to every saint in the calendar. We share Xenophon's own puzzlement that the state could have condemned to death such a simple-minded old gentleman for impiety.

But this was not the man they condemned. As suggested in the first chapter, it was almost a formula with Xenophon, when he admired a man (and he had in excess the goodly gift of admiration) to extol him for the piety and pious practices which played a dominant part in the eulogist's own life. That he deliberately grafted these domestic pieties upon Socrates is impossible; if he had conceived Socrates as the impious neglecter or defamer of the gods, he would have been the last to attach himself to the man or to rise in his defense. But that he absurdly misconstrued him seems patent. Socrates shared, as no other teacher, the life of his city; and the religious rites were so closely associated with folk-habits that he may well

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the ethnic period which lay between Xenophon's meaning of belief and his own. I myself believe in those resplendent deities. The fact is that religious narrowness always naively interprets the religious life of another by its own, unless kept back by clubs and spears. Give it the salute of mere human recognition, and it claims you for its sect. I have heard of an old lady who was moved by the orthodoxy of "that devout man, Mr. Gibbon." Joseph Cook, after an impertinent pilgrimage to Concord, announced so blatantly his conversion of Emerson that the family finally caused a printed denial to be circulated. That evangelist's methods were sometimes disingenuous; but here he seems merely to have fallen victim to his fatuity. The apostle probably asked: "Mr. Emerson, do you believe in sin? in salvation? in the Saviour? in rewards and punishments? in the Scriptures?" And the patient heathen as probably nodded a winsome assent of infinite detachment. I used to see at Cambridge my revered teacher William James crossing over every morning at nine o'clock to the brief chapel exercises in the yard, and have heard him both condemned and ridiculed by students

who equally misconceived the simplicity and depth of that analytic yet brooding mind.

But we are approaching a point of view. If Xenophon cannot be taken literally, he adumbrates a positive truth. If Socrates was not religious in the folk-sense, he was religious in a higher sense. He did recognize the transcendental implication. Even Xenophon now and then seems to have caught his larger phrase: "His formula of prayer was simple—Give me that which is best for me." And it is difficult to imagine Plato making an absolute atheist even the dramatic protagonist of an ethical philosophy in which the transcendental implication is consciously conceived as fundamental. But much further it seems impossible to go. Socrates recognized the divine foundation and sanction of the moral law, whether he ever uttered the argument from design so rhetorically developed by Xenophon or not. But the rest is silence. Whether he held to one divine being, as is not unlikely; and whether immortality was more than the high hope of the *Apology*, as seems doubtful—we cannot report. An early tradition tells of a Hindu conversing with Socrates (and it is not historically impossible that some soldier

from the Indus, impressed into the Persian armies, remained in Greece, as exile or slave, after the defeat). And he said, "Tell me, Socrates, what is the substance of your teaching?" "Human affairs." "But you cannot know human affairs if you don't know first the divine." Socrates, though no Oriental, may have assented in his own fashion. Yet the tradition hints at the true situation. He proclaimed the nobility of man, rather than the decrees of a god. He found the divine written in the human heart and brain, not on tablets of stone in the mountains. He came with no avowed revelation; he burned with no wrath against the folk-religion; he inaugurated no specifically religious reform. He was a messenger, a ministrant, a saviour, whose ethical idealism in word and conduct had its conscious religious aspect; but he was not primarily a religious leader. Mohammed passed from Allah down to man; it was man who led Socrates on to Zeus.

Yet the indictment went on to accuse him of introducing gods of his own. Of this there is no evidence in the sense apparently intended. Plato makes Meletus call Socrates during the trial "a complete atheist"; and, when Meletus

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indictment is but one more proof that the Socratic message of righteousness was often enough verbally associated with the transcendental implication. For, when we say that Socrates was not primarily a religious teacher, we do not forget that he was put to death partially on a charge of religious teaching; the inconsistency is merely formal.

Xenophon refers the charge to a misunderstanding of the *daimonion* which, according to common tradition, Socrates often mentioned as his warning voice or sign. Whether this explanation be in line with a hint in the preceding paragraph or not, may be left to the reader. We are forced, however, to examine the phenomenon in itself. What was the *daimonion* (*τὸ δαιμόνιον*)? The question is double: what was it to Socrates? what is it for us? Though Socrates seems to have treated it, or pretended to treat it, somewhat like a familiar spirit or good genius, the word has properly no personal or theological meaning. Euripides and Thucydides, both men of the Enlightenment, use it of that which, given by fate, man must adjust himself toward and to. It was not synonymous with "demon"; Cicero rightly translated it "divinum quiddam" (*De Divinatione*, I, 54,

122). To Socrates it may have been a literal voice, sounding in the inner ear. Not alone visionaries like Joan of Arc and Swedenborg have heard voices: Pascal and Luther heard them, though the former was the shrewdest intellect and the latter the soundest stomach of his age, and both men rooted in solid earth. If so, we turn the problem over to the psychologists—without, however, implying the neurotic decadence that becomes the business of the alienist. And they may name it a manifestation of the transcendental ego, or an instance of double personality, or an objectification of an unusually developed instinct of antipathy or of an abhorrent conscience, a non-rational residuum in the most rationalistic of men. Or to Socrates it may have been but a playful mode of referring to his disapproval of whatnots of conduct, ethical or otherwise, a disapproval reasoned out or immediately felt. The suggestion, tentative as it is, is still not an arbitrary assimilation of an ancient mind to modern rationalism. We know the ironic habit of Socrates, ironic not only toward others, but, with that deeper wisdom, ironic toward himself. We know he was given to playful exaggeration, especially to quizzical tropes. His

pedagogic method he called midwifery; his faculty for friendship and for bringing friends together he referred to as incantations or pandering, using the most erotic expressions, which, in literal use, referred to things often even from the Greek point of view immoral; so too he seems to have spoken of his mantic, his oracular power, meaning simply foresight or premonition. The conception of the mind and temper of Socrates to which I have come inclines me to number the *daimonion* also among the tropes.

Again, if we take the *daimonion* literally, what of the Dog? The Platonic Socrates is found enforcing his asseverations by a blasphemous canine oath, which sounds like a historic reminiscence and may hint at another source of the charge of impiety and new divinities. "By the Dog they would" (*Phaedo*); "By the Dog, Gorgias, there will be a great deal of discussion before we get at the truth of all this" (*Gorgias*); "Not until, by the Dog, as I believe, he had simply learned by heart the entire discourse" (*Phaedrus*); and "By the Dog" he swears again in the *Charmides*, in the *Lysis*, and in the *Republic*. By what Dog? Molossian hound or Xanthippe's terrier?

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A PERSONALITY.

A MAN is bigger than his career and deeper than his ideas, for they are but the imperfect struggle of personality to objectify itself—the primary struggle of every man, and ever at best a noble failure. Socrates is more than the facts of his life and more than the Socratic teaching; for both are but derivative verbs of action from a concrete substantive of being.

The physical foundation of his life was like those immemorial outputs of earth, the rocks and trees, rather than the supple and beautiful strength we associate with the white bodies of Greeks. And this pristine and autochthonous hardihood, that might have served paleolithic man in the windy Neanderthal, found itself undisturbed amid the gracious products of Ionic luxury, and supported without discomfort one of the keenest intellects and one of the goodliest temperaments of civilization. Thus

will Nature sometimes remind us of the continuity of her antique brood.

That was an incessant intellect. Most of us glance at a problem now and then or deliver a judgment, but for Socrates there was no respite. Untiringly curious, subtly discriminating, penetrating to the center, grasping essential values, unembarrassed, coherent and certain of aim through all involutions of discourse, ready with sentence or phrase, his mind stood, whether brooding at Potidea, or debating at Athens, a challenge to all comers for a long generation, vigorous to the last.

A pathfinder without map, a pioneer with no base of supplies, getting his direction from observing the ambiguous light of the common ken and conduct of man, he blazed the road and dug the trenches for the armies of thought.

His self-reliance of intellect was also a self-reliance in the art of living. They might cartoon, threaten, indict, murder him, but they could not change him. Steadfastly rooted in himself, devoted with singleness of purpose and unhasting courage to his own business, he would quietly gainsay any attempt at interruption or deflection.

Yet without self-consciousness, arrogance, or

vanity; without pride, too, except in the supreme moment, where, in the face of defiant injustice, his pride was the proud sense of the security of the truth he witnessed; humble and homely, democratic in conduct, even if not a complete democrat in political theory, learning from high and low, interested only in truth, never in displaying his store or facility, and detached from all self-seeking.

Gregarious, convivial, loquacious, stalking from agora to symposium and back again, meddlesome as an itinerant evangelist, hearty and whole as an after-dinner speaker, incorrigibly fond of humanity, as thoughtless of soiling his skirts and losing social prestige as of arousing the jealousy of "the uninvited," he was never away from the city, except in the excellent company of her citizen militia.

He was dowered, more than any philosopher since, with good nature, kept from souring by that subtle preservative, humor. This humor played cheerfully about the ears of the pestilential and bumptious youth, with bonhomie and irony before the judges, with whimsical imagination mockingly around the details of an inquiry or around his own domestic troubles and his own intellectual activities, and if

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is the righteousness we seek to fulfil. He is the first great incarnation in Europe of the moral law, faithful unto death.

This is a true superman. The ruthless egoist, if not the ideal of Nietzsche, at least the avowed ideal of many Nietzscheans, who, trampling out the weak, mounts more and more into a power more and more his own, where does he stand at last when by virtue of that strength the world is his in right of eminent domain? Alone in a universe of the irrevocable dead, without even a groan from the pile or an imprecating fist to serve his turn—shorn of all power, because forever without a remnant whereon to exercise the power he coveted, irretrievably defeated by that logic of life which should prove to us that the superman presupposes men, that power presupposes opportunity, and that the only power which adds power to the individual is that which he exercises to save his fellows and conserve the ideals of the race.

The qualities sketched above he had each in generous measure. Socrates must be writ large; he is human but prodigally human, with an abundance of each portion of himself. But the man in his uniqueness emerges only

when we contemplate the difficult but triumphant blend of those qualities, so seldom found together. Superficially, he may recall in one aspect or another, Tolstoy, Emerson, Lincoln, Dr. Johnson, Franklin, Confucius, or the great Jesus; fundamentally he is unlike all men, yet close to all. "There is only one Socrates," said Tatian; yet he belongs to everybody.

But, like the rest of the world's eminent, he falls short of epitomizing humanity. Some qualities he had not, if we read our records aright. Truly, he lacked humanity's worst passions and vices and shared apparently in few of its blunders. And on the other hand, though a Greek, he had little joy in the glory and the charm of nature or of art: the blue sky over Athens and the flowery fields beyond the walls, the Parthenon and the shining goddess on the hill came not into his discourse, and thus apparently only casually into his ken. He had not the creative imagination. He was no poet, like Jesus and Mohammed, each in his way. His kindliness had yet none of the plangent pity for the sorrow of life, naught of the throbbing love and enfolding arms. His righteousness, as we have seen, burned with no fiery imprecation, entreaty, or command, and

rose, cool, observing, undepressed, assistant, before his own shortcomings or the sins of the world. His religious consciousness phrased itself in loyalty to the divine, as a mode of thinking and acting among men, not in prostration or in ecstasy: he was neither a god-smitten nor a god-intoxicated man.

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dialectic, easily misunderstood in its deeper moments, and more through the certainty of goodness he was in himself. "Socrates is the only man who ever made me feel ashamed," said Plato's Alcibiades.

His chief influence after death is found in Plato. From Socrates's skill in a peculiar conversational method (soon to become a popular literary type),[1] Plato derived the form of his essays, subsequently the model for Cicero and writers in the modern tongues. From Socrates was the stimulus to his prime interest in ethics, and to his far-reaching inquiries into the nature of knowledge. In the Socratic definitions, ideals, moral principles, or whatever we prefer to call his established universals of ethical thought and life, is the germ of Platonic ideas. In Socrates's recognition of the transcendental implication were the materials for the ladder which Plato constructed from human experience to the supreme good. And the man who gave Plato starting-points with such range of outlook for his thought likewise strengthened Plato's spiritual character by contact of life with life, and enriched Plato's art by furnishing his creative pencil with a model

[1] So recognized already by Aristotle.

beyond price. Different, far different though he was from his master, Plato's debt to Socrates was enormous. It has, however, been paid, and in the manner best pleasing to the master—paid to humanity with pieces of silver and gold of his own, still current, which it lies outside the scope of this essay to specify.

Aristotle, by the critical attention he gives to the thought of Socrates as well as by his Socratic, rather than a Platonic, attitude as investigator and formulator of life, attests his intellectual line; even as the moral influence of Socrates seems behind him when he says, speaking in the *Nicomachean Ethics* of certain differences between his thought and Plato's, "Friends and truth are both dear to us, but it is a sacred duty to prefer truth."

The other philosophic movements, as is well known, derive also from Socrates. Aristippus, stressing and revising the utilitarian criterion, develops a hedonism, which, combined with the atomism of Democritus, gives birth to Saint Epicurus, the long misjudged. Antisthenes, stressing the principle of self-limitation in the Socratic precept and conduct, founds the Cynic school and points the way to the Stoa. Euclides, stressing the dialectic, prepares the

soil for a neo-scepticism, which, however, contained within itself its own refutation.

No historic generalization ever put to paper was absolutely true; but far truer than most is this: Socrates is fountain head not only of scientific ethics, but of all metaphysical systems in which the point of departure is a theory of knowledge rather than a theory of being, the foundation an epistemological rather than an ontological structure.

His subtler influence on the inner life of the generations cannot be disassociated from the sympathetic and uncritical reading of Xenophon and Plato, especially their accounts of his last days; nor need it. Where those narratives have taken deepest hold they seem fortunately most true to the Socratic outlook on life and the Socratic walk in the midst of life.

Socrates, as we have seen, was often with Cicero; and he accompanied Seneca in his death. But by the second century banded zealots were preaching a new hero and a new martyrdom to the pagan cities of the Mediterranean; yet we find the church fathers, often more liberal-minded than later theologians, explaining the new martyrdom by the old, and defending Christ by Socrates. Justin (150),

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senting voices, as the terrible Tertullian and the rabid Lactantius, it would seem that not the least important historical service of Socrates was his mediation between paganism and Christianity, his influence in the spread of the new faith; although it is to be recalled that his ethic was grounded in knowledge and the Christian's in revelation, and that the Christian said, "be saved through Christ," and Socrates, "save yourselves."

Among the moderns he has left his impress on men as different as Goethe, Emerson, and Mill. But incalculable must have been his influence on the impressionable generations of European schoolboys from the dawn of the Renaissance, whose best-thumbed Greek prose texts have been these same Socratic records.

Nor alone on the European youth: though in our American academies to-day Greek have but one prophet to every ten or twenty for the kingdom of Mechanics, or the kingdom of Microscopy, or the kingdom of Manual Arts, the face of Socrates may appear in unexpected places and with something of the old look and power. But the other day a reformer talking in the huge armory of a western State University on the fight for honest government,

after citing the execrated excuses of the big bankers and brokers and civic officials "compelled to take and to give bribes or be ruined in business," commented with a sudden and passionate dignity: "How different was the answer—twenty-three centuries ago—of Socrates, who, condemned to death by an unjust senate, when friends would open for him the prison doors, refused to fly, because it was against the laws of his country." And three thousand generous young men and women applauded and cheered loudly; and who shall say that the traditional integrity of the dead Greek, here thus so unexpectedly revealed once more and so nobly approved, may not abide with one or another of that audience, to help him, as it helped so many in the old days, to sturdier manhood and more earnest citizenship.